

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 3047

As of February 27, 2008

Title: An act relating to cost savings on course materials.

Brief Description: Requiring disclosure of certain information relating to higher education course materials.

Sponsors: Representatives Armstrong, Newhouse and Upthegrove.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/15/08, 85-9.

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/27/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: A 2005 study conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) stated that college textbook prices nearly tripled from December 1986 to December 2004. These prices increased by 186 percent, while tuition and fees increased by 240 percent, and overall inflation was 72 percent during the same time period. The GAO study attributes textbook cost increases to several factors. The primary reason the cost of textbooks has increased in recent years is because of "bundling," which is the addition of supplemental materials, such as CD-ROMs. Another factor cited in the study was the frequent revision of textbooks.

Each of the six public baccalaureate institutions in the state is affiliated with a bookstore. In 2006 the Legislature passed legislation requiring the boards of regents of the state universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College to work with affiliated bookstores, students, and faculty representatives to adopt rules for affiliated bookstores, and directed faculty to consider price when assigning course materials. In 2007 the Legislature added community and technical colleges to the list of schools covered by the 2006 legislation.

Many students are buying both used and new books from sources outside the affiliated campus bookstore. Textbooks are also available from websites where the prices may be significantly cheaper for new books though doing so means longer shipping times and no return.

Summary of Bill: Affiliated bookstores are required to disclose information on required course materials at least four weeks prior to the start of the class for which the materials are required. Course material information includes title, author(s), edition, price, and International Standard Book Number. The requirement may be waived on a case-by-case basis.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Engrossed Bill: PRO: This is a simple idea to allow students sufficient time to find the most economical source of course materials.

OTHER: There are often last minute changes to textbooks, so students could be provided with inaccurate information. ISBN numbers often change and students could be misled. It would create an administrative burden for part-time faculty who are often retained just prior to the start of classes. The provision does nothing to save student's money.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Newhouse.

OTHER: Julie Suchanek, TESC; Erin Brown, SBCTC; Bernal Baca, AFTWA, UFWS.